

Final Project Report to the NYS IPM Program, Agricultural IPM 2002-2003

Title: *Branching Out*, An Integrated Pest Management Newsletter - An Implementation Proposal for, Christmas Tree Farmers, Nurserymen, and Landscape Managers

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CCE educators with horticulture responsibilities in selected counties including Albany, Chemung, Dutchess, Erie, Greene, Monroe, Nassau, Oneida, Orange, Putnam, Rensselaer, Rockland, Saratoga, St. Lawrence, Suffolk, Tompkins, and Westchester Counties.

Type of Grant: Public Education

Project Location(s): Ithaca

Abstract: Eleven issues of Volume 10 of *Branching Out - An Integrated Pest Management Newsletter for Trees and Shrubs* were published in 2003. The newsletter was sent to 650 subscribers and an additional 90 cooperators. Readers received timely information for identifying and managing a wide array of insect and disease problems on trees and shrubs. With more counties throughout the state adopting the New York State Neighbor Notification Law, timely information about pests and pest management options has become essential for the industry, and *Branching Out* is one of the few sources of such information.

Background and Justification: During the growing season, tree health managers are in constant need of up-to-date information on the occurrence and distribution of potentially damaging insect and disease pests. They also need to know what management options are open to them in the event that intervention is needed. Inasmuch as the need for this information comes at a time when most managers are working 14-16 hour days just to accommodate the needs of their clients, they would most benefit from an instrument that speaks directly to their concerns without the distraction of advertisements and other extraneous information.

In 1994, we sought to improve communication with the tree care industry through publication of a bi-weekly newsletter, *Branching Out*. Publication has continued every year since then with the number of subscribers ranging from 500 - 700 in any given year.

Subscribers can also receive *Branching Out* via the Internet simply by requesting the proper access code from our staff. The electronic version has many more illustrations and numerous links to other internet sites where more information on pests, pathogens, and pest management strategies can be found.

Objectives: *Branching Out* is intended to improve pest identification and appraisal, maximize timing for scouting and management activities, offer a forum for public dialogue between scientists and pest managers, and provide a formal, annual published record of insect and disease occurrence in New York State.

Branching Out is intended to enable tree care professionals to reduce pesticide use and maximize efficacy of applications that are made by:

1. Improving pest identification and appraisal via feature articles with color and B/W photos, line drawings, and verbal descriptions,
2. Maximizing timing for scouting and management activities via reporting of our own scouting report,
3. Offering a forum for public dialogue between scientists and pest managers via question and answer sections and regional reports by CCE educators and IPM specialists,
4. Providing a formal, annual published record of insect and disease occurrence in New York State.

Procedures: Objectives 1-4. Each issue of *Branching Out* is comprised of at least five sections which taken together are intended to achieve the objectives stated above. A Scouting Report, Growing Degree Day and Phenology records, a Feature Article in which issues related to identification and/or management concepts are presented, two Regional Reports, and a Miscellany section for presentation of important issues not covered in previous sections seem to meet the needs of the audience. Occasionally, questions submitted by readers or generated by our staff to reflect issues raised in personal visits or phone calls are also answered.

The Scouting Report and Phenological Records are generated during bi-weekly scouting trips to most important horticultural areas in the state and after consultation with CCE staff. Growing degree days are from published data and from measurements taken at county sites. Feature Articles are prepared in advance from contemporary literature and staff experience. Regional Reports are written by county-based CCE staff and may reflect existing situations or be of a philosophical nature. Information for Miscellany comes from many different sources. *Branching Out* also serves as a vehicle for dissemination of 2(ee) labels for several important pests. Subscribers receive the appended labels immediately within - at most - two weeks of publication, and they could proceed to implement the expanded uses soon thereafter. Line drawings and photographs have been used to great effectiveness to supplement text and more are planned. *Branching Out* is also posted on the Internet with access limited to paid subscribers.

Results and Discussion:

Branching Out was published bi-weekly from mid-April through mid-July and tri-weekly from July through September for a total of 11 issues in the 2003 season.

Each issue contained a scouting report-comprised of results from our own bi-weekly scouting trips to sites from Farmingdale, Long Island to Rochester together with reports from county Cooperative Extension agents, Cornell's Insect and Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab, and knowledgeable tree care professionals throughout the state. We also reported growing degree days from published data and from measurements taken at county sites. Phenological observations are results from our observations during the scouting trips. We chose one pest or group of pest for subject of an in-depth feature article. We also invited submission of regional reports prepared by Cornell Cooperative Extension educators and members of the IPM program staff and published 16 such reports during the season. Occasionally, an item that we thought was especially important for our readers to know about was published under "Miscellany" category.

The addition of a digital camera to our equipment has enabled us to increase the numbers of photos we have at our disposal for use in the hard copy, as well as the web version of the newsletter.

In 2003, *Branching Out* subscribers were especially well prepared to deal conventional insect and disease pests of landscape plants as well as some unexpected problems. The cooler weather throughout the summer allowed spruce spider mites to stay active most of the season and the consequences of this added feeding to the quality of spruce and fir Christmas trees could be significant. Our conscientious scouting program let plant health care professionals know these pests were unusually active and that they had a wider than normal window to knock down some of those populations. Potato leafhopper injury was severe on landscape and nursery plants in the Long Island area. The feeding injury is so different from that due to most other insects that people are inclined to suspect a fungal or bacterial twig blight or late spring frost or anything other than leafhoppers for damage. We were able to dissuade tree care professionals from treating affected trees as if they were affected by twig blight. An outbreak of tent caterpillars (both Eastern and forest) resulted in major defoliation in the areas of St. Lawrence County, East Jefferson County and North Lewis County. Inasmuch as this is likely to be a repeated phenomenon in those counties next year, we've tipped off readers to be prepared and not be caught off guard. *Viburnum* leaf beetle was found in two new counties in New York State this year. Quick publication of this important find put hundreds of trained professionals on alert to eradicate this introduced pest before it becomes established in their areas. We forewarned readers that the periodical cicada brood X is scheduled to emerge in specific areas 2004. We told them to keep this in mind when planning their planting for this fall or spring. We recommended they either focus on non-hosts or postpone planting favored species until after the peak emergence periods if they are in an area the cicadas are expected to occur. An option we suggested to protect small ornamental trees and shrubs is to cover them with mosquito netting or cheesecloth while cicadas are present.

In our feature articles, we highlighted the following additional topics.

- Bacterial Leaf Scorch
- Bleeding Cankers of Beech
- Common Plant Bugs
- Emerald Ash Borer
- Exotic Insect Pest Update
- Lilac Shoot Blights
- New Developments in Tree Pathology-Hot Off the Press!
- Plum Pox Virus
- Recent Developments in Identifying Pest Resistant Plants
- Shoots Moths of Pine

Volume 11 will be published in 2004